

REFLECTIONS ON JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

I often feel drawn to relate the story told by John Freeman in his "Introduction" to Man and His Symbols of how that classic introduction to Jungian psychology came to be written. Sometime after his B.B.C. television interview with C.G. Jung, John Freeman was asked by the manager of a publishing company to approach Jung and request of him to write a book presenting his ideas for the general public. After patiently listening to Freeman's request, Jung politely, but adamantly, refused. He had always written for a professional, technical reading audience, and was not willing to compromise his ideas, which had so often been misunderstood. Accepting the finality of Jung's answer, Freeman returned to London to relate the results of his mission to the man who had originally sent him to Jung. The publisher was not willing to take no for an answer, and sent Freeman back to Zurich again, to try and persuade Jung once more to undertake the writing of a book for the educated lay public.

In the interim period between Freeman's first and second visit, Jung had the following dream, which I reproduce from Man and His Symbols (p. vi):

He dreamed that instead of sitting in his study and talking to the great doctors and psychiatrists who used to call on him from all over the world, he was standing in a public place and addressing a multitude of people who were listening to him with rapt attention and understanding what he said.

With this dream Jung was convinced of the value of condensing his ideas in a form presentable for the non-professional reader. He willingly consented to undertake the editing of what eventually was his final book, Man and His Symbols. Jung completed his contribution to the book, an essay entitled "Approaching the Unconscious", ten days before falling sick with his final illness. Having completed a concise statement of his ideas which the non-professional layman could read, Jung's lifework was complete. Soonafter he died.

Although I had known little of Jung prior to reading Man and His Symbols as an undergraduate student over five years ago, when I first read this story something very deep inside of me was activated. I sensed a very deep connection with the story of how one man's dream moved him to act in the world, and leave behind a final statement prior to his death. Little did I know at that time just how deep an influence Jung's ideas would have on my own life, and on the lives of so many people around me.

Having had two active years of involvement with the C.G. Jung Society of Montreal, I see now how the dream related above influenced me in the founding and establishment of the Jung Society. While I do recognize the professional expertise required for an in-depth understanding of Jungian thought, I also see how Jung's understanding of the unconscious speaks to every man and woman struggling with the process of coming to consciousness in this time.

Little did Jung realize how many people would be led to an exploration of their own unconscious processes by the ideas he put forth in Man and His Symbols, and in his post-humously published autobiography Memories, Dreams, Reflections. Nor did he ever imagine just to what extent Western man would become involved in the contemporary search for higher consciousness.

And yet, as I prepare to leave Montreal in pursuit of my own professional training, I recognize that the ideas expressed in the dream which prompted Jung to write Man and His Symbols go far beyond anything Jung, Jungian analysts, or Jungian societies can contribute to the seekers of consciousness of our time. Today we are entering the so-called Age of Aquarius in which each individual must bring forth for himself or herself the light of consciousness. What Jung saw in his dream was more than merely people understanding the conceptual and practical aspects of Jungian psychology. Rather, as I see it, Jung's dream was a prophetic vision of individuals understanding the nature of the unconscious - whether that understanding is within a Jungian context or not! To believe that only Jungians have an understanding of the archetypal psyche is to misinterpret that to which Jung dedicated his entire lifework. To believe that a Jungian Society has a more sophisticated approach to understanding the unconscious than other contemporary spiritual and psychological organizations, is to put more emphasis on a Jungian organization than Jung himself would have ever wanted anybody to do. And finally, to believe that Jungian analysis is the only way to achieve individuation and an integrated contact with the unconscious is simply foolish and naive.

With the passing of time, Jung will go down in history as one of the great pioneers of the unconscious. His theories will remain the building blocks for exploring the nature of the group consciousness of the Aquarian Age, and also the full implications of a planetary collective unconscious. However, exploration of transpersonal dimensions of the unconscious will invariably surpass many of Jung's contributions to our understanding of the nature of the psyche. And unless the C.G. Jung Society of Montreal will recognize that as part of its planning and growth priorities, it too will be surpassed by far more conscious and more aware organizations, dedicated to the exploration of the nature of human consciousness.

Steven Paull
Founding Chairman

We do not know how far the process of coming to consciousness can extend or where it will lead. It is a new element in the story of creation and there are no parallels we can look to. We therefore cannot know what potentialities are inherent in it. Neither can we know the prospects for the species Homo sapiens.